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WX LOCALS OUT (450)

BISSELL-CUBAN

WASHINGTON, JULY 20 (AP)-HEAVY DOMBING OF FIDEL CASTRO'S AIR FIELDS WOULD HAVE GIVEN CUBAN REFUGEE INVADERS "A DAMNED GOOD CHANCE OF SUCCESS" AT THE BAY OF PIGS, SAYS A FORMER CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY OFFICIAL.

RICHARD M. BISSELL JR., WHO WAS IN CHARGE OF PLANNING THE 1961 INVASION FOR THE CIA, MADE THE COMMENT IN A COPYRIGHTED INTERVIEW PUBLISHED TODAY BY THE EVENING STAR.

U.S.-TRAINED AND EQUIPPED CUBAN EXILES LANDED ON THE SOUTHERN COAST OF THE COMMUNIST ISLAND ON APRIL 17, 1961, IN AN INVASION DESIGNED TO TOPPLE CASTRO. IT ENDED IN DISASTER TWO DAYS LATER, WHEN THE INVADERS RAN OUT OF AMMUNITION AND SUPPLIES.

BISSELL TOLD STAR STAFF WRITER ORR KELLY AN ADMINISTRATION DECISION TO CALL OFF A SECOND SCHEDULED AIR STRIKE BECAUSE OF CRITICISM FROM AROUND THE WORLD MIGHT HAVE MADE A CRITICAL DIFFERENCE IN THE OUTCOME OF THE INVASION.

"IF WE HAD BEEN ABLE TO DUMP FIVE TIMES THE TONNAGE OF BOMBS ON CASTRO'S AIR FIELDS, WE WOULD HAVE HAD A DAMNED GOOD CHANCE," HE SAID.

BISSELL, INTERVIEWED IN HARTFORD, CONN., WHERE HE NOW IS AN EXECUTIVE OF UNITED AIRCRAFT CORP., SAID PEOPLE INVOLVED IN MAPPING THE ASSAULT MISCALCULATED THE CHANCES OF KEEPING U.S. PARTICIPATION A SECRET.

"...IT BECAME OBVIOUS TO ALL THAT WHAT WAS BEING DONE IN CUBA COULD NOT HAVE BEEN DONE BY AN UNAIDED EXILE GROUP," HE SAID.

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HISTORIAN ARTHUR M. SCHLESINGER JR. REPORTED SUNDAY THAT THE LATE PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY WAS SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE INVASION PLAN RIGHT UP TO THE TIME HE GAVE THE FINAL GO-AHEAD.

UNDER KENNEDY'S INSTRUCTIONS, SCHLESINGER SAID, THE INVASION WAS PLANNED SO THAT IT COULD BE CALLED OFF ANY TIME UP TO 24 HOURS BEFORE IT ACTUALLY BEGAN.

BISSELL SAID HE AND CIA DIRECTOR ALLEN DULLES BRIEFED KENNEDY ON THE INVASION PLAN AT PALM BEACH, FLA., JUST AFTER THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION.

AFTER THAT, HE TOLD KELLY, KENNEDY MADE THE KEY DECISIONS.

SCHLESINGER REPORTED DULLES AND BISSELL "ACCEPTED PROGRESSIVE MODIFICATIONS" IN THE INVASION PLAN. "PERHAPS THEY UNCONSCIOUSLY SUPPOSED THAT ONCE THE OPERATION BEGAN TO UNFOLD, IT WOULD NOT BE PERMITTED TO FAIL," HE SAID.

"WE CAN BE CRITICIZED FOR ALLOWING THIS CHIPPING AWAY TO GO ON WITHOUT INSISTING ON THE WHOLE PLAN OR ON CANCELLATION," BISSELL SAID. "BECAUSE WE WERE SO INVOLVED IN SEEING IT GO AHEAD, WE DID NOT INSIST ON AS GREAT FREEDOM OF ACTION AS WE NEEDED."

BISSELL SAID HAD THE INVASION BEEN CANCELED, THE UNITED STATES WOULD HAVE FACED A DIFFICULT PROBLEM IN DEALING WITH THE INVASION FORCE IT HAD TRAINED.

"WE HAD NO FINAL PLAN OF WHAT WOULD BECOME OF IT," HE SAID. "THEY WERE THE MOST POWERFUL MILITARY FORCE BETWEEN MEXICO AND PANAMA, AND IT IS ENTIRELY POSSIBLE THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE TRIED TO SEIZE A BASE ON NICARAGUA, HONDURAS OR GUATEMALA.

"THEY NOT ONLY WOULD HAVE WON, BUT THEY COULD HAVE DEFEATED ANY GUATEMALAN FORCE," BISSELL SAID.

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